

HOW TO WRITE A LAST-MINUTE PAPER



Reduce, reuse, and recycle.

Reduce your study time, reuse old texts, and recycle old ideas. Select a topic or thesis that you have written on before in a different class. You already know the material, and you can lift particularly strong points or written passages.



Write an outline.

Figure out your main thesis and write down all the points you will use to support your main idea. Refer to this while you are writing your paper; it will help you stay on theme and maximize your time.



Know your professor.

Make your essay fit a professor's personality or agenda. Do not write on a topic in which she is a specialist. She will see the flaws or shortcomings in your argument immediately.



Focus on what you know.

Write on an issue about which you are passionate. You will write more quickly and easily and in a persuasive and compelling manner.



Manipulate the formatting.

Increase the leading (the space between each line of text), point size (the size of the type), and margins.

Select a font that is large to begin with. These visual tools will make your essay look longer. Do not go overboard: Using 18-point type is an immediate giveaway that you are fudging the length of the paper.

Be Aware

Take interrelated courses or a general and a specific course on the same subject. If you have taken a Shakespeare class, take an Elizabethan history course. This will cut down on studying multiple material.

HOW TO CRAM FOR A TEST



Pull in outside material.

Read condensed or simplified versions of the course material. Dig up old textbooks or material from previous classes. Take advantage of study guides, whether published online or photocopied from previous classes. If you are in an English class, watch the movie adaptation of a required book or play. Check the description of a work on literary websites.



Skim reading material.

Read the first and last sentence of paragraphs. Read the book jacket, introduction, conclusion, table of contents, and glossary.



Seek out other students.

Ask someone from class if you can photocopy his notes. Also ask what he considers the main points to

study. If he's been paying attention in class, he will have a good idea of what will be on the exam.

★ **Review exams from previous courses taught by your professor.**

Check your campus and dorm libraries; they often keep old exam files on hand.

★ **Find a quiet place to study.**

Seek out a well-lit empty classroom, coffee shop, or quiet area of the library. Avoid studying in your dorm room or apartment; there are too many distractions. If you can find a friend to study with, bring him along. You can quiz each other periodically and keep each other's spirits up. Bring caffeinated drinks, snacks, gum, and anything else you might need to stay alert. You do not want to be distracted by hunger.

★ **Maintain your normal routine.**

If you normally eat breakfast, eat something before the exam. Practice "state-dependent" learning—if you drink coffee while studying, drink coffee during or right before your exam. If you chew gum while memorizing slides, chew gum during a test.

★ **Be prepared.**

Wear comfortable clothes in layers in the event that the lecture hall or classroom is too hot or cold. You do not want your external surroundings to distract you. If you work better in complete silence, bring earplugs. Bring extra pens, pencils, and blue books.

★ **Use every minute before your test.**

Review your notes or texts up to the moment your exam begins. Information you most recently reviewed will be uppermost in your mind during the exam; this is called the "recency effect." You are likely to recall specific details that you can effectively incorporate in an essay.

★ **Do not discuss the subject as you enter the examination room.**

Last-minute discussions about content or people's panicked questions can be confusing and misleading. You've done all you can—stay focused.